

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EB-07 OMB-01 BIB-01 CIEP-01 CIAE-00

DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01

PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 TRSE-00 /068 W

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R 301120Z JUL 75

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1783

INFO AMEMBASSY ROME

CONFIDENTIAL SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 19716

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, IT, FR

SUBJECT: FRENCH POLITICAL AND GOVERNMENTAL PERCEPTIONS
OF ITALIAN ELECTIONS

1. SUMMARY: FRENCH POLITICAL AND GOVERNMENTAL CIRCLES
HAVE SHOWN LITTLE INTEREST IN THE RECENT ITALIAN
ELECTIONS. POLITICAL PARTIES CONSTITUTING THE GOVERN-
MENT'S "MAJORITY" DOWNPLAYED THE PCI GAINS, WHILE THE
"UNITED LEFT" FOUND REASON FOR SELF-CONGRATULATION.
OUR FOREIGN MINISTRY CONTACTS ARE GUARDEDLY OPTIMISTIC.
AFTER COLDLY ANALYZING THE BASIS FOR COMMUNIST STRENGTH,
THEY CONCLUDE THAT ITALY WILL SOMEHOW MUDDLE THROUGH -
AND IN ANY CASE, SEE NO BASIS FOR FRENCH OR EC RE-
ACTION. END SUMMARY

2. REACTIONS OF POLITICAL PARTIES.

FRANCE'S "MAJORITY" POLITICAL PARTIES HAVE TROD
LIGHTLY ON THE THEME OF THE ITALIAN ELECTION RESULTS.
WHILE CONTINUING TO FOCUS PUBLIC ATTENTION ON THE
"RISING TIDE OF COMMUNISM W/HICH THREATENS TO SPREAD
ACROSS EUROPE", MAJORITY SPOKESMEN HAVE, NEVERTHELESS,
CUT THEIR COMMENTARY ON THE ITALIAN SITUATION TO A
MINIMUM. THEY ARE PRESUMABLY HOPING THAT THE INTERNAL
CONTRADICTIONS OF ITALIAN POLITICS WILL SOMEHOW EFFACE
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THE COMMUNIST ELECTORAL GAINS. BOTH THE FRENCH

SOCIALISTS AND COMMUNISTS HAVE PRODUCED SELF-CONGRATULATORY PROSE TO CELEBRATE THE PCI'S GAINS. THE P.S. SEIZED ON THE RESULTS AS CONFIRMATION OF ITS CLAIM THAT A DEMOCRATIC SOCIALIST FORCE, WHETHER REPRESENTED BY COMMUNISTS OR SOCIALISTS, CAN WIN IN WESTERN EUROPEAN ELECTIONS. FOR THE COMMUNISTS, THE ELECTION RESULTS REPRESENT THE VICTORY OF A "BROTHER PARTY;" THEY GLOSS OVER THE VAST IDEOLOGICAL DIFFERENCES WHICH SEPARATE THEM FROM BERLINGUER'S MORE "DEMOCRATIC" AND MORE LIBERAL PCI.

3. GOF REACTIONS.

THE FOREIGN MINISTRY'S GUARDEDLY OPTIMISTIC ANALYSIS WAS DESCRIBED TO EMBOFFS JULY 24 BY ITALIAN DESK OFFICER DEBENEST. SHE SAID ITALIANS HAD GIVEN PCI HEAVIER SUPPORT IN JUNE ELECTIONS THAN PREVIOUSLY OUT OF LASSITUDE AND OUT OF CRAVING FOR ORDER AS WELL AS CHANGE. SHE BLAMED CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY FOR SCANDALS AND SCLEROSIS; SOCIALIST PARTY WAS NO BETTER. UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, SHE FOUND IT UNDERSTANDABLE FOR ITALIANS TO GIVE THEIR VOTES, IN PROVINCIAL AND MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS, TO THE ONLY PARTY WHICH APPEARED TO SATISFY THEIR DESIRES. DEBENEST CONSIDERS THESE ELECTION RESULTS AN ALARM BELL, BUT ONE WHICH ITALIAN CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS AND SOCIALISTS DO NOT APPEAR READY TO HEED. WHILE NOT DESPAING, SHE SEES NO SIGN OF NEW MODERATE LEADERS COMING FORWARD TO REPLACE THE ENDLESSLY REPEATING DC AND PSI CHIEFS.

4. DEBENEST INDICATED THAT INCREASED COMMUNIST POWER IN ITALY MAY WELL BE FACTOR WE HAVE TO LIVE WITH FOR

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SOME TIME. SHE ALSO ANALYZED JUNE ELECTIONS AS SHOWING TREND TOWARD BIPOLARIZATION: VOTERS ARE FORSAKING LIBERAL AND SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTIES AT CENTER IN FAVOR OF CD OR PCI AT TWO EXTREMES. SHE EMPHASIZED, HOWEVER, THAT PCI IS NOT LIKE OTHER COMMUNIST PARTIES; IT IS NATIONAL PARTY WITH BOURGEOIS CHURCH-GOING LEADERSHIP. SHE ALSO INSISTS PORTUGUESE SITUATION HAD NO APPRECIABLE EFFECT ON ITALIAN VOTERS.

5. FOR IMMEDIATE FUTURE, DEBENEST EXPECTS CONTINUATION OF CENTER LEFT COALITION WITH NEXT GOVERNMENT CRISIS PROBABLY THIS FALL. SHE EMPHASIZED IMPROVED ECONOMY AND FACT THAT UNEMPLOYMENT IS NOT SO MUCH A SOURCE OF POLITICAL UNREST IN ITALY AS ELSEWHERE IN WESTERN EUROPE.

6. DEBENEST CONCLUDED THAT ITALY HAS GREATER ELASTICITY THAN MOST COUNTRIES IN THAT IT CAN WAIVER ON EDGE OF DISASTER AND THEN STEP BACK TO NORMALCY. SHE CONSIDERS ITALIANS HAVE UNIQUE CAPACITY TO MUDDLE THROUGH AND, THEREFORE SHE REJECTS PESSIMISTIC PREDICTIONS FOR ITALY'S FORTHCOMING LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS. SHE EMPHASIZED THAT FRANCE WILL NOT, IN ANY CASE, CONTEMPLATE

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ACTIONS TO INFLUENCE THE ITALIAN POLITICAL SITUATION, EITHER UNILATERALLY OR THROUGH THE EC. IN SUM, DEBENEST SAID, GOF IS NOT PREOCCUPIED BY ITALY'S POLITICAL FUTURE.

7. COMMENT: THESE FINAL CONCLUSIONS OF QUAI DESK OFFICER CONFIRM OUR IMPRESSION OF GOF ATTITUDE. QUAI POLITICAL DIRECTOR TOLD CHARGE HE SHARES THE CONVICTION OF MOST ITALIANS, THAT ITALY WILL MUDDLE THROUGH ITS CURRENT ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL DIFFICULTIES WITHOUT SERIOUSLY UNDERMINING THE SYSTEM, WHETHER OR NOT THERE IS COMMUNIST PARTICIPATION IN THE GOVERNMENT. THIS PRESUMABLY ALSO REFLECTS HIGH LEVEL GOF CONCLUSION THAT, IN ANY CASE, PARIS NEITHER CAN NOR WILL DO ANY-THING WHICH WOULD APPRECIABLY INFLUENCE EVENTS IN ROME.

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